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Rural canadians' guide to the
internet

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Shopping

Shopping on the Internet is easy. Options for browsing and purchasing on-line are growing at an enormous rate. Many retailers are now on-line and rural Canadians have access to a selection of everyday and specialty goods (such as books and music) that they never had before. Many Canadians who live in rural and remote areas have traditionally shopped from conventional mailed catalogues and are finding that the same information is available on-line and that these "virtual" catalogues offer a versatility that print catalogues can't.

Meeting others with similar interests

The Internet is home to hundreds of thousands of special-interest discussion groups. Rural Canadians are finding that the Internet is an excellent way to pursue personal interests and hobbies. Even if your hobby is rare, it's likely that you'll find someone on-line somewhere in the world with the same interest. Whether it's entomology, politics, religion, homeopathy, needlepoint or model train building, you'll find people on-line sharing information about your hobby.

Long distance education

Many rural Canadians have managed to complete certifications and degrees through the Internet. There are a growing number of recognized educational institutions in Canada that offer single courses or entire certificate programs that can be completed on-line. There are also a growing number of "Internet universities" where individuals can take courses at very little cost.



Media

Canadians in rural and remote communities enjoy accessing on-line editions of newspapers that they would never find locally. They also use the Internet to tap into Canadian and international radio and television news services where they can listen to radio reports, see video news reports and read extensive background information on subjects that make the news.

Getting started

The Internet has made the 20th century's prediction come true — the world truly is a global village, and we can all be participating citizens no matter where we live.

Public libraries and community centres throughout Canada offer Internet access terminals and many offer basic instruction. The Community Access Program (CAP), a federal government initiative, offers matching financial assistance to communities of more than 400 people. This financing is for acquiring computers and modems to connect communities to the Internet. If your community does not yet have a CAP site, speak to your local government and community associations.



Web sites of interest

Canadian Rural Partnership — information about federal rural programs and services
<http://www.rural.gc.ca>

Strategis — information about federal business and consumer programs
<http://strategis.ic.gc.ca>

Community Access Program
<http://cap.unb.ca>

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Getting Started

Rural Canadians' Guide to the Internet

Are you among the millions of Canadians who live in a rural or remote community? Have you been wondering whether the Internet has anything to offer you and your family? Read on to find out how you can use the Internet to find information conveniently, pursue hobbies and interests, start or expand a business, take a university course, or stay in touch with friends and family.

Communication with friends and family

Internet E-mail allows you a simple, timely and cost-effective way to stay in touch with your extended family, children at university or friends who live far away. In addition to simple text messages, E-mail allows you to attach digital images and video or sound files to your messages. It's the multimedia way to stay in touch.

Convenience

Many rural Canadians must travel long distances to perform basic banking functions. Most Canadian banks and many credit unions now offer the option of banking online. Although you can't deposit or withdraw money using your computer, you can get account statements and balances, transfer money between accounts, and pay utility and telephone bills. You'll get all this convenience for transaction fees that are often lower than those for banking in person, and all your transactions will be immediate.

Better your business

Canadians in rural and remote communities are using the Internet to broaden the market for their businesses. Products can be sold online and new customers can be found inexpensively. Government Internet services such as Industry Canada's *Strategis* Web site allow rural business owners easy access to export information, supplier lists, business management tips and more.

Easy access to information

Canadians in rural and remote areas have often had difficulty finding information conveniently. The Internet offers ready access to all kinds of useful resources, including federal and provincial government information and services, all Canadian phone books and postal code directories.

On-line Canadians routinely cite access to medical and health-related information as one of their preferred uses of the Internet. You'll also find information on every subject imaginable, including agriculture, gardening, geography, child rearing, disease, entertainment, pets and transportation to name only a few. Farmers can find information on new farming techniques, breeding stock, weather, suppliers and trade prices for crops.



Research before you commit

The Internet is a convenient, no-pressure environment in which to research before you buy a big ticket item such as a snowblower, car, refrigerator or tractor. Most manufacturers now have Web sites that describe their products, often with suggested prices.

Other sites provide reviews of products, independent of the manufacturer. Discussion groups allow you to ask other users about the product.



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